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SUBJECT: MEPI UPDATE FOR MOROCCO

REF: 07 Rabat 1724

¶1. Summary: This cable highlights MEPI programs and initiatives in Morocco from April 1 through June ¶30. During the quarter MEPI Women's Pillar Program Manager Olivia Ricchi visited Morocco to assess breast cancer awareness, and the Mission approved two new local grant proposals. Other activities included a corporate ambassadors' event, an International Research and Exchanges Board's (IREX) workshop on Citizen Journalism in the Maghreb, interviews for the MEPI Youth Summer Institute, and MEPI Alumni Network and Financial Service Volunteer Corps (FSVC) projects. Implementers are partnering with local NGOs at the grassroots level to support numerous programs committed to reform in the four MEPI pillars. End Summary.

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MEPI TEAM ASSESSES MOROCCO'S BREAST CANCER SITUATION  
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¶2. MEPI Women's Pillar Program Manager Olivia Ricchi and Roselie Vasquez-Yetter from implementer ICF International visited Morocco on June 4 and 5 to conduct an assessment of Morocco's breast cancer treatment capacity, explain the Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer to key interlocutors, and learn about Morocco's efforts to raise awareness and combat the disease. The assessment team succeeded in explaining the Partnership program to the Moroccans and whetting their interest. Morocco is actively working on breast cancer issues and is interested in participating in the MEPI Middle East Breast Cancer Partnership activities, as announced at the Economic Forum by First Lady Bush. Ricchi and Vasquez-Yetter learned about Morocco's first national breast cancer awareness campaign, which took place between April 25 and May 25. The breast cancer effort has the personal support of King Mohammed VI's wife, Princess Lalla Selma, who opened a cancer treatment center in June and was the driving force behind the national campaign. Ministry of Health Secretary General El Makkaoui told the visiting MEPI team that the MEPI-funded breast cancer program would provide opportunities for partnering in the fields of training and research. Staff from ECON, POL and PAS contributed to the success of this visit.

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NEW MEPI SMALL GRANTS

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13. In April, the Mission approved two new MEPI local grants totaling USD 87,406.60. The first recipient, the "Comite de Soutien a la Scolarisation des Filles Rurales" (CSSFR) will conduct a broad lobbying campaign targeting the representatives of the Ministry of Education in three different cities. It is aimed at increasing the number of schools in rural areas that enable local girls aged between 12 and 17 to complete their primary and secondary education in optimal conditions and to minimize school drop-out rates. In the second, journalist Rachid Janakari (MIT Media) will train media trainers in 11 different cities on internet drafting and publication of multi-media content (text, sound and image). The project aims to reinforce the skills of the local and private media in Morocco, supporting the efforts of media reform by exposing them to new forms of publication and communication on-line.

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CORPORATE AMBASSADORS' EVENT  
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14. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Businesswomen's Network Moroccan Hub, "Association des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises du Maroc" (AFEM), hosted a Corporate Ambassadors' event, June 9 - 10, in collaboration with Vital Voices Global Partnership through a MEPI funded program. This two-day, highly interactive and dynamic conference featured U.S. Corporate Ambassadors Judith Willson (Vice President, Bernstein Global Wealth Management), Kathleen Diamond (Founder and CEO, Language Learning Enterprises, Inc), and Sandra Taylor (President and CEO, Sustainable Business International LLC), and outstanding Moroccan speakers. The theme of the event was "Women's Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Growth," and featured business skills workshops on Strategic Planning, IT and Corporate Growth, Strategic Human Resources, Corporate Social Responsibility, along with workshops on Advocacy topics. AFEM anticipated that around 200 business women and men would attend, but were only able to attain about half of that number. Nonetheless, the two-day event provided business and advocacy capacity building, and offered a unique opportunity for both Moroccan businesswomen and U.S. executives to network and exchange ideas that will help solidify the critical link between businesswomen in the MENA region and the U.S.

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IREX CITIZEN JOURNALISM WORKSHOP  
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15. A group of 22 journalists and bloggers from throughout the Maghreb region attended IREX's workshop on Citizen Journalism in the Maghreb in Casablanca, May 23- 25. Overall, the workshop was well-received. Virtually all of the participants commented on the quality of the other participants, and they appreciated the opportunity to strengthen their networks. There had been a discussion in the Tunisian blogosphere prior to the workshop, with some urging a boycott due to the connection with the United States and MEPI. After the workshop, everyone praised the free flow of ideas, open discussion, and the way the participants were encouraged to drive the agenda. During the week following the workshop, many bloggers who attended posted positive commentary about the workshop content and the networking opportunity with fellow bloggers. One of the Tunisians took the initiative to create an IREX alumni group on Facebook for workshop participants as a means of keeping everyone

connected and sharing resources and information.

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#### MEPI YOUTH SUMMER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

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¶6. The Public Affairs Section (PAS) in Rabat interviewed more than 70 undergraduate students from all over Morocco. Ten of them, representing different geographic areas and socioeconomic backgrounds, were selected to participate in the seven-week intensive leadership training program in the U.S. for undergraduate students, from June 30 to August 13. One of those selected is an alumnus of the Access micro-scholarship program. PAS arranged pre-departure briefings for the students and explained that the Institute consists of leadership training workshops, academic sessions, site visits, community service projects, home stays and other cultural activities. The program includes a two-day orientation in Washington, D.C., a four-week academic residency program at a U.S. university or college, and a two-week educational study tour to other regions of the U.S. A MEPI grant will be awarded to the student who designs the best community project.

¶7. As part of the international book day celebration, the Information Resource Center scheduled a series of programs with the participation of Ms. Hind El Hasbaoui, university student and summer 2007 alumna of the MEPI "Study of the U.S. Institute," who shared with attendees her experiences in the U.S. and conducted a workshop on leadership.

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#### MEPI ALUMNI NETWORK ACTIVITIES

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¶8. During this quarter, the MEPI Alumni Network focused on civil society reforms. MEPI Alumni received training in the following areas: youth and volunteerism, fundraising, advocacy and lobbying. These events are a great networking opportunity and aim to enhance the professional and personal development skills of the MEPI Alumni.

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#### FSVC PROJECTS

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¶9. In April, FSVC provided two volunteers to consult with Bank Al-Maghrib (BAM) working group focusing on effective supervision approaches for microcredit associations (MCAs), given the 2006 extension of its legal supervisory responsibilities to include such institutions. Volunteers from Bolivia and South Africa provided an overview of their countries' approaches to the regulation of MCAs. As a result of the project, BAM has advanced its efforts to develop a viable regulatory framework applicable to MCAs, considering current legislation and regulation. It is now in a better position to interact with other stakeholders in the ongoing debate over the direction of the microfinance sector in Morocco.

¶10. In May, the Banque Centrale Populaire (BCP) central management unit requested FSVC to assist its Internal Audit and Compliance department with a training and consultations program which would complement ongoing assistance to BCP on the development and strengthening of their Internal Audit and Risk Management functions. FSVC provided two volunteers to conduct a five-day consultation and training program on the skill sets and techniques required to effectively audit BCP's

credit departments responsible for disbursement of loans to businesses of different scales, including small and medium enterprises and larger institutions. The volunteers' case-focused training helped the BCP Audit team launch a program to improve audit practice to international standards by improving internal organization and applied audit practice.

¶11. In June, BAM Supervision sought FSVC assistance on improving applied practice in oversight of consolidated accounts of Financial Conglomerates. BAM has instituted obligatory consolidated accounting using international accounting standards (IAS) to replace the prior French Accounting Standard as part of its program to move the financial sector to compliance with international practices. Building on prior FSVC consultations the volunteers via practical practice-based insights on addressing supervisory- oriented IFRS related reporting problems helped BAM Supervision teams work through analytical issues regarding implementing effective supervision using IAS/IFRS reporting. Volunteers also identified general structural approach issues that BAM should address for both consolidated accounts for financial conglomerates and for general bank reporting.

¶12. A detailed description of MEPI programs in Morocco can be found on the Mission unclassified Internet web page at [www.usembassy.ma](http://www.usembassy.ma).

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